

1 Expressions of Religious Experience

1.1 In general

108: 'Religious experience spontaneously manifests itself in changed attitudes, in that harvest of the Spirit that is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. But it also is concerned with its base and focus in the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, and the expression of this concern varies greatly as one moves from earlier to later stages of meaning.' See the next two paragraphs, and recommend Girard's massive reorientation of this material.

1.2 What's the Evidence?

On 108-109 Lonergan says there is no clear-cut evidence that religious experience more or less universally conforms to this model, 'apart from the antecedent probability established by the fact that God is good and gives to all [people] sufficient grace for salvation.' In 'Religious Experience' he calls this question a large and open question. In the least it is what Christians will bring to the dialogue of world religions, to that coming convergence of world religions that Lonergan seemed to affirm. But here and elsewhere he finds some support in the work of Friedrich Heiler, who has found seven areas common to the major world religions: (1) there is a transcendent reality, (2) it is immanent in human hearts, (3) it is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness, (4) it is love, mercy, compassion, (5) the way to this reality is repentance, self-denial, prayer, (6) the way is love of neighbor, even of enemies, and (7) the way is love of God, and bliss is knowledge of God and union with God. Girard would insist that the link to the transcendence of violence is essential to authentic religion and that this is progressively revealed in the Bible.

On p. 109 he shows how his model fits Heiler's analysis, how these seven common features are implicit in the experience of being in love in an unrestricted manner. 109: 'To be in love is to be in love with someone. To be in love without qualifications or conditions or reservations or limits is to be in love with someone transcendent. When someone transcendent is my beloved, [that someone] is in my heart, real to me from within me. When that love is the fulfilment of my unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence through intelligence and truth and responsibility, the one that fulfils that thrust must be supreme in intelligence, truth, goodness. Since [that one] chooses to come to me by a gift of love for [that one], [that one] must be love. Since loving [that one] is my transcending myself, it also is a denial of the self to be transcended. Since loving [that one] means loving attention to [that one], it is prayer, meditation, contemplation. Since love of [that one] is fruitful, it overflows into love of all those that [that one] loves or might love. Finally, from an experience of love focused on mystery there wells forth a longing for knowledge, while love itself is a longing for union; so for the lover of the unknown beloved the concept of bliss is knowledge of [the beloved] and union with [the beloved], however they may be achieved.'

On p. 290, Lonergan is less hesitant about the evidence for his basic model. ‘... I do not think the matter is in doubt. In the realm of religious experience Olivier Rabut has asked whether there exists any unassailable fact. He found such a fact in the existence of love. It is as though a room were filled with music though one can have no sure knowledge of its source. There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.’ This experience will provide foundations with its first set of special categories.

2 Religious Development Dialectical

The integration of a good deal of Girardian material would mean developing the next section, ‘Religious Development Dialectical.’ We will not be able to go into much detail on the Girardian contribution here. What Lonergan says are the following:

2.1 Spontaneous expression

The spontaneous expression of such experience is the change of our attitudes, the harvest of the Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. This holds in any stage of meaning.

2.2 Expressions of concern with mystery

Conceptions of and orientations to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* that is the base and focus of religious experience varies greatly with the stages of meaning. In earlier stages outward occasions are what make religious experience something determinate and distinct for human consciousness. There result the gods of the moment, the god of this or that place, the god of this or that person, the god or gods of different groups. Such identifications can perdure in later stages, as when we think of certain places as holy places. Moreover, at any stage there can be more or less authentic manifestations of religious concern. There can be a loss of the personal dimension of ultimate mystery, an overemphasis on transcendence, an overemphasis on immanence, the cult of a God that is terrifying slipping over into demonic destructiveness, an exultant destructiveness of oneself and of others. This is precisely the point of entry for Girard.

2.3 The word

There is a difficulty in expressing religious experience, and it is the difficulty of moving from the ‘withdrawal from objectification’ in the ‘unmediated experience of love and awe’ (or the ‘mediated return to immediacy’ [77]) to the ‘word’ that enables religious experience to enter the world mediated by meaning and regulated and motivated by value. Think of Teresa of Avila. This ‘word,’ strictly speaking, is any expression or embodiment – intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, linguistic, incarnate. Prior to entering the world mediated by meaning, especially by the spoken or written word, religious experience is a ‘prior word’ spoken by God flooding our hearts with love. That prior word pertains to a world of immediacy. It (112) ‘withdraws [us] from the diversity of history by moving out of the world mediated by meaning and towards a world of

immediacy in which image and symbol, thought and word, lose their relevance and even disappear.’ But often there is the return from that immediacy by the word, and then religious experience enters the world mediated by meaning, endowing it with its deepest meaning and highest value.

Now, that subsequent word is not just an incidental expression. It is constitutive of the religious situation, personally and socially and historically, just as the word of love between two human beings is constitutive of their being in love. In addition, it may be that the outer word as well as the inner word of religion is from God.

The word of religion will differ in different stages of meaning. Lonergan’s concern is with what this word has to be in the third stage. It cannot be confined to common sense, and so, while it will draw on the power of symbols to suggest or evoke what cannot adequately be said in any other way, it will have to do more than this. It cannot be content with adding theory, for without self-appropriation theory gives rise to controversies that it cannot resolve, and bogs down in the contrasts and tensions between common sense and theory. 115: ‘... the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is set against the God of the philosophers and theologians. Honoring the Trinity and feeling compunction are set against learned discourse on the Trinity and against defining compunction. Nor can this contrast be understood or the tension removed within the realms of common sense and of theory [the realms of almost all theology studied in the first phase]. One must go behind them to the realm of interiority. For only through the realm of interiority can differentiated consciousness understand itself and so explain the nature and the complementary purposes of different patterns of cognitional activity.’ The realm of interiority has today become the realm that grounds direct theological discourse, enabling theology to speak a new mediating word. Very little theology, of course, is actually doing this, and it is indeed very difficult to do, as anyone will discover who tries it.

3 Faith and Beliefs

In the sections on faith and beliefs (7-8) Lonergan returns to the basic model of religious experience and expression, and fills it out.

3.1 Faith

Love, then, gives rise to a knowledge that one would not, could not, have if one were not in love. And faith is the knowledge born of religious love. ‘The heart has reasons which reason does not know.’ ‘Reason’ here means experience, understanding, and judgment, knowledge on the first three levels of consciousness. ‘The heart’ is consciousness on the fourth level when that consciousness is wrapped up in the dynamic state of being in love. ‘The heart’s reasons’ are feelings responding to value. 115: ‘... besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love.’

That knowledge is faith, when the love is God's love flooding our hearts. The value it apprehends is transcendent value, and the apprehension (115) 'consists in the experienced fulfilment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, in our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe.' That fulfilment finds objectification, mediation, in those who speak of (116) 'a clouded revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness.' And then there occurs the question of God in a new and non-philosophic form. 116: 'Will I love [God] in return, or will I refuse? Will I live out the gift of [God's] love, or will I hold back, turn away, withdraw? Only secondarily do there arise the questions of God's existence and nature, and they are the questions either of the lover seeking to know [God] or of the unbeliever seeking to escape [God]. Such is the basic option of the existential subject once called by God.'

What does this knowledge born of love do? It makes God the originating value, the entire universe the terminal value, encompassing the human good. And it enables us to engage in the pursuit of the human good with a new energy and efficacy. 117-18: 'Without faith, without the eye of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognizes that God grants [human beings] their freedom, that [God] wills them to be persons and not just ... automata, that [God] calls them to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good. So faith is linked with human progress and it has to meet the challenge of human decline ... Faith places human efforts in a friendly universe; it reveals an ultimate significance in human achievement; it strengthens new undertakings with confidence ... Most of all, faith has the power of undoing decline. Decline disrupts a culture with conflicting ideologies. It inflicts on individuals the social, economic, and psychological pressures that for human frailty amount to determinism. It multiplies and heaps up the abuses and absurdities that breed resentment, hatred, anger, violence. It is not propaganda and it is not argument but religious faith that will liberate human reasonableness from its ideological prisons. It is not the promises of [human beings] but religious hope that can enable [people] to resist the vast pressures of social decay. If passions are to quiet down, if wrongs are to be not exacerbated, not ignored, not merely palliated, but acknowledged and removed, then human possessiveness and human pride have to be replaced by religious charity, by the charity of the suffering servant, by self-sacrificing love.' Etc., etc., and more in *Insight* 20.

3.2 Beliefs

What Lonergan writes of faith is common to all realizations of religious love, and it is not limited to any one tradition. But in addition there are the specific beliefs of given traditions. Their basis, if they are authentic, lies in faith and love, but they add the further judgments of fact and of value made by given religious communities in history.

Now if the beliefs of a community are derived within the horizon opened by the gift of love, those beliefs may themselves be from God, the result of a personal entrance of God into the world mediated by meaning, 'the advent of God's word into the world of religious expression' (119). Then 'not only the inner word that is God's gift of ... love

^ 116
last 9

but also the outer word of the religious tradition comes from God.' Christians believe this is true of what has come to them from the religion of Israel and from Christianity.

3.3 *The significance of the distinction of faith and beliefs*

Loneragan regards this distinction as fruitful as a basis for dialogue and encounter among the religious traditions. It displays a deeper unity in religious love. 119: 'Beliefs do differ, but behind this difference there is a deeper unity. For beliefs result from judgments of value, and the judgments of value relevant for religious belief come from faith, the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God's self-disclosure.' The distinction also enables each tradition to specify what is distinct about it.

4 Interiority, transcendence, and theology

The final section enumerates six consequences for theology of the turn to interiority and transcendence as the foundational realms of meaning.

First, there is the transition from 'sanctifying grace' to the dynamic state of being in love, that is, from the metaphysical foundation of an entitative habit, absolutely supernatural, infused into the essence of the soul, to an experience from which a theology of grace is derived.

Second, there is the transition from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis, allowing for a developmental approach to the concrete subject, where love can precede knowledge and be disproportionate to its causes, conditions, occasions, antecedents, and where the dangers of 'pure intellect' and 'arbitrary will' are overcome.

Third, the Christian theological problem of the salvation of non-Christians is reduced.

Fourth, the Christian apologist's task is clarified: it is to aid others in integrating God's gift with the rest of their living.

Fifth, what was called *lumen fidei* and faith in the older theology becomes faith and beliefs in this proposal: a transposition of terminology that also changes the older position.

And sixth, the acknowledgment of a knowledge born of love opens on a twofold movement in consciousness: healing and creating.

Add material from 'Religious Knowledge' on the validation of religious conviction.